

Read: Revelation 19:17-20:15*'Also another book was opened, the book of life.'***Revelation 20:12**

In these verses, in powerful and detailed imagery, we read of the “final battle”, of the victory of Christ and before that the one thousand year reign of Christ. We hear of the martyrs, those who have been faithful even unto death, who will reign with Christ for those one thousand years, reward and vindication for them. Then, the final battle, where Satan and his forces combine in battle against Christ, seeking to overthrow him, but they are not victorious, Christ is the victor. The powers of darkness are overthrown, judged and condemned to an eternity without God.

What of *'the thousand years'* (v.7)? Is it a literal time and reign of Christ and His people before the final battle? Or is it more symbolic of the age of the Church, the present age? Is the thousand years an earthly or heavenly reality? There are many views taken on this. Whatever view one takes, surely the main point is that Christ will win the victory, that the powers of darkness, sin and death will be finally vanquished, and that all will face judgement. Those who oppose Christ will face condemnation whilst the faithful will share in the victory.

We must respond to these words by turning again to Christ, repenting of our sins, by renouncing evil and putting our complete confidence in the One in whom we find the promise of life. We are reminded, then, of the promises of Baptism to life in Christ. We must also renew our commitment and our zeal to reach out to others and to encourage one another in our Christian discipleship, confident that those who are faithful will share in His victory.

Finally, we must be reassured. There is so much in the world that speaks of darkness, death and destruction. The powers of evil are all too real, and show themselves in many and varied ways...but they will not have the final word. We mustn't allow ourselves to become too absorbed by the darkness and too fearful for the future...for we can be confident that the victory belongs to Christ, and that if we are for Christ our names are written in the book of life.

Let us pray: *Lord, You call us out of the darkness to live as children of light. Renew our confidence and strengthen our hope in the promise of life that knows no end. Amen.*

The Revd Damian Porter, Vicar of The Parish of the Ascension, Torrisholme & Westgate.